The Duty and Advantage of ſetting GOD *always before us.*

A

SERMON

PREACH'D before the

QUEEN

AT

St. *JAMES's* Chappel,

ON

Sunday the Second of *March*, $170\frac{6}{7}$.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,

WILLIAM Lord Biſhop of OXFORD.

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Sermons
26.

Pſalm xvi. 8.

I have ſet the Lord always before me.

THat this *Pſalm* was *David*'s, we have the Teſtimony of St. *Peter*, *Acts* 2. 25. where he brings him in ſpeaking theſe Words of my Text, and the following ones to he end of the *Pſalm*, concerning Chriſt: But though *David* eing a Prophet, and a Type of Chriſt, had in them a ſpecial eſpect to the Antitype, in whoſe glorious Reſurrection they ere to be afterwards more eminently fulfill'd, yet, no doubt their firſt and immediate Senſe, they belong'd to himſelf, nd ſo I ſhall now conſider them: And in them we may ob-rve

David's wiſe Practice, and
The bleſſed Conſequences of it.

is Practice he gives us an account of in the Text, *I have*, ſays e, *ſet the Lord always before me.*

The Bleſſed Conſequences he relates in the following Verſes, . An holy Aſſurance, that God, if he ſaw it beſt for him, ould deliver him from his Perſecutors; or if, for wiſe Reaſons, ſhould give his Life into their Hands, he would yet redeem s Body from the Grave, *Make known to him the way of Life, and ke him full of Joy with his Countenance.*

That which I would infer from both, is this Propoſition, That e right Practice of this Duty, of *ſetting God always before us*, the likelieſt courſe to promote our Temporal Security, and r everlaſting Salvation: This was the ground of *David*'s Con-lence in relation to both; and the ſame Confidence and ho- Aſſurance may they raiſe to themſelves, who lay the ſame ſe Foundation for it.

Permit me then to explain to you the wiſe Courſe the Royal almiſt took, and to recommend his Practice to your Imitation, om the bleſſed Conſequence it will produce.

I. For explication of the Duty: And here I ſhew you Three hings,

1. What is meant by *Setting God before us.*
2. Under what Notion of him we are to *ſet God before us.* And
3. How we muſt ſet him *always* before us.

1. What is meant by *ſetting God before us*: It wou'd be too at an Affront to your Judgments, and Abuſe of your Time,

to proceed negatively, in satisfying this Enquiry, and to shew that by *setting God before us* is not be understood, that we do, or can by any act of our Minds, make God to be present any where, where he was not, or privy to any Thing which he knew not before; who, whether we think of him or not, is present in all Places, and knows all Things. To proceed therefore affirmatively, in the Duty are imply'd these two Things;

1. A firm Assent to, or hearty Belief of, these two great Attributes of God, his Omnipresence, and Omniscience.

2. A practical Consideration of these Attributes, or application of that Belief, to the government of our Lives.

1. A firm assent to, or hearty Belief of these two great Attributes of God, his Omnipresence, and Omniscience. In stating these Doctrines, which are to be the Objects of this Belief, I fear I should no more edifie you, than satisfie my self, if I should take my measures from the nice Speculations of the Schools, or the results of those Enquiries, wherein some thinking Men have, with too much freedom, indulg'd their Curiosities: It is a melancholick Thing to reflect upon the variety of Opinions, which these audacious Searches have produc'd, in relation to God's Omnipresence, which differ widely from one another about the manner of it, and yet seem to agree in losing the Thing it self.

Some say, That he is not present every where by his Essence, but in Heaven only by his Essence, and every where else by his Power and Providence: And if so, then his Power must be something diverse from his Essence, and may be conceived to be, where his Essence is not.

Others say, That he is every where by his Essence, and of these, some hold that he is so by way of infinite Extension; but how that which has not Quantity nor Parts can be extended, is pretty difficult to apprehend.

Others say, That he is every where after the manner of a Point, and that he is whole every where, and whole like a Point in every part of the World: And if this be so, that the whole Divine Essence is in any Physical Point; then either the whole Divine Essence does not exist without that Point, and then how is it every where? Or if it does exist without that Point, then the whole Divine Essence does exist without the whole Divine Essence.

Others, lastly, not knowing how to reconcile these Contradictions, or solve these Difficulties, have roundly deny'd that God is every where properly, and asserted that his Omnipresence is no real Attribute of God, but only an extrinsical Denomination, by which he is said to be present every where, only upon the account of his working every where.

But can any thing work every where, and not be every where? can any thing work where it is not?

Then for God's Omniscience, to omit other Particulars, which

work has been made about his fore-knowledge of future Contingents, (*i. e.*) of such Things as depend upon free Agents, that have a liberty of determining themselves to either part of the contradiction?

Because they knew not how to account for a fore-knowledge that must be certain of Events that are so contingent.

Some being unwilling to part with the liberty of Man's Will, have given up the Præscience of God.

Others, as unwilling to part with the Doctrine of the Divine Præscience, have given up the liberty of Man's Will, and freedom of his Acting.

They both agree that such Contingents are not knowable.

The former therefore infer, that God does not fore-know them.

The latter teach that God does foreknow them, but has to that end remov'd them from a State of possibility, into a condition of futurition, from being such things as only may be, to be such things as certainly shall be; (*i. e.*) that he might foreknow them, has by his Decree prædetermined them, and so made them not to be Contingents.

But have we not as many Demonstrations of the Error of the former, as we have Prophecies in Scripture of future Contingents? For if God has foretold, that such Events, as depend upon the freest determinations of Man's Will, shall fall out so, or so, he must certainly foreknow them; for if he did not foreknow, how could he foretel them?

And have we not as many Arguments to prove the mistake of the Latter, as we have Laws and Precepts laid down in Scripture for the directing, and governing of moral Actions, and Rewards and Punishments assign'd there for Obedience or Disobedience to those Laws? For, if Men were not free Agents, or had no power of determining their own Actions, they could not be either capable of doing moral Good or Evil, or consequently Subjects of Rewards, or Punishments, for one or the other.

Leaving therefore these attempts of *vain Philosophy*, vain then certainly, if ever so, when it puts Man upon *being Wise above what is written* in Things pertaining to God, upon knowing more of him, than he has been pleas'd to discover of himself, let us *give heed to the more sure word of Prophecy*, the Revelations of Scripture, the only *light that shines*, or can guide us in these *dark* Enquiries.

And first for his Omnipresence; let us see what God himself says of it by his Prophets, *Is.* 66. *v.* 1. *Thus saith the Lord, the Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool:* and *Jer.* 23. *v.* 24. *Do not I fill Heaven and Earth, saith the Lord? Heaven and Earth* are frequently used in Scripture to signifie the whole Universe, and all the parts of it; so *Moses*, speaking of the whole Creation, *Gen.* 1. 1. says, *In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth*; that is, the whole World, and all the Creatures in it;

and in that Sense it is used by our Saviour, *Mat.* 5. 18. *till Heaven and Earth pass*, i. e. 'till the whole Fabrick of the World be dissolved: So then God declares of himself that he fills all Places, and therefore cannot be excluded from any.

Again, the Prophet *David* in the 139 *Psalm* cries out at the 7 *Verse*, *Whither O Lord shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy Presence?* Whither? why I can go no where from thee, for *if I ascend up into Heaven thou art there; if I make my Bed in Hell behold thou art there; if I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even there shall thy Hand lead me; or if I say the darkness shall cover me, even the Night shall be light about me.* There is no Place so high or deep, or remote or obscure, but thou, O God, art present in it. To these Words of *David*, let me add those of his Son *Solomon* at the Dedication of the Temple, 1 *Kings* 8. 27. *Will God indeed dwell on the Earth? Behold the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain thee.* From all which, we learn thus much concerning God's Omnipresence, that God fills all Places, and yet is not comprehended in any. If any one ask how these Things can be, that he should be excluded from no Place, and yet included in none? I must answer with the *Psalmist* in the verse immediately preceeding those I lately quoted, That *such Knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is too high I cannot attain to it*: The manner how, is inexplicable by the Wit of Men, but the Thing certain from the Word of God, that he who is infinite and cannot be circumscribed, is so present every where, that there is no Place, nor can any be conceived, where he is not.

2. For God's Omniscience; and here, without departing from the guidance of the Scripture, we may conclude, that his Knowledge, who is in every thing infinitely Perfect, is very different, as all his Ways are, from our imperfect ones: That he does not know Things after our weak manner, being led by Discourse and Ratiocination from Things known, to Things unknown; but all Things are at once present to him; he sees and knows them all at one simple View, as the Apostle speaks, *Heb.* 4. 13. *All Things are naked and open to the Eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

All Events and Occurrences *whersoever* they happen, for *Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?* Jer. 23. 23.

All, *whensoever* they happen, not only present, and past, but future ones too; upon this Head God challengeth the Gods of the Heathens, *Is.* 41. 21, 22, 23. *Prosecute your Cause, saith the Lord, bring forth your strong Reasons,* —— *Let them bring forth and shew us what shall happen,* —— *shew the Things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods*; and this Knowledge of future Things St. *James* ascribes to God, *Acts* 15. 18. *Known to God are all his Works from the beginning of the World.*

All

All, not only those of greater Consequence, as the changing of States, and revolutions of Governments, *He ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*, Dan. 4. 17. in which Prophecy he foretold the great Monarchy's long before they were set up; but his Knowledge extends to the most inconsiderable Events, and minutest Things; *Not a Sparrow falls to the Ground without him, and the very Hairs of our Head are all numbred.*

And not only natural Events, but whatsoever proceeds from rational and free Agents, he perfectly knows; *Can any Man hide himself in secret Places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord*, Jer. 23. 21. and as to the Actions of Men *David* tells us *Psal.* 33. 13, 15. *The Lord looks from Heaven, he beholds all the Sons of Men, —— he considereth all their Works*: Nay as to their Words and their very Thoughts, he says, *Psalm* 139. *there is not a word in my Tongue but thou O Lord knowest it altogether*, v. 4. *And* v. 2. *Thou, Lord, understandeth my thoughts afar off*; in short, all Things near, or far off, past, present or future, even Contingent Things, little or great, whether the works of God, the effects of Nature, the necessary actions of Bruits, the free ones of Men, their Words and Thoughts, and whatsoever is knowable, they are all clearly open at one view to the Divine Omniscience. This may startle our poor Reason, but even that Will tells us, that as to the divine Perfections, it becomes us to admire what we cannot comprehend, and instead of searching curiously into this great Attribute, to cry out with St. *Paul*, Rom. 11. 33. 34. *O the depth of the Riches of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out! for who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his Counsellor?*

Now a hearty assent to, or firm belief of these two Attributes of God, that he is so every where present, that we cannot be any where, where he is not; that he so knows all things, that we can neither suffer, do, speak, nor think any thing that he knows not, is the first Thing imply'd in *setting God before us.*

2. The Second is a practical Consideration of these Attributes, or an application of that belief to the Government of our Lives: For this Faith, without it produces a suitable practice, will be so far from Advantaging us, that it will aggravate our Sins, and make our Condemnation heavier than it would have been, if we had been ignorant of, or Infidels in those Attributes. *To set God before us*, then is not only to believe, that where ever we are, we are in his Presence, but so to behave our selves every where, as becomes that awful Presence; not only to believe that whatever we do, is seen by him, but for that Reason, to endeavour, that whatever we do, may be approved by him; and how this may be done, we shall have occasion to shew more particularly, in the remaining Inquiries. The next whereof is,

II. Under what Notion of him we are, *to ſet God before us.* And here I ſhall conſider God, with relation,

1. To moral Actions, and
2. To other Events.

I. In relation to moral Actions, we are to conſider God,

1. As an holy Law-giver, that has preſcrib'd righteous and good Laws for the Government of them.

God is frequently repreſented in Scripture under the Notion of a Law giver; *the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Law-giver,* ſays the Prophet, *Iſ.* 33. 22. *and there is one Law-giver that is able to ſave and deſtroy,* ſays St. *James,* 4. 10. now God has preſcrib'd Laws for the Government of our Lives two ways.

1. By imprinting in the Heart of Man, the common notices of Good and Evil in the firſt Creation of him, which ſhew him what is Honeſt, and what Diſhoneſt, what is to be done, and what to be avoided, this is called the *Law of Nature*; and this St. *Paul* ſpeaks of in the 2d *Chap.* of the Epiſtle to the *Romans,* at the 14 *Verſe, When the Gentiles which have not the Law,* i. e. not the reveal'd Law, *do yet by Nature the Things contain'd in the Law, theſe having not the Law, are a Law to themſelves, which ſhew the work of the Law written in their Hearts*; and this Law is ſufficient both to convince the Tranſgreſſors of Sin, as it there follows, *their Conſcience alſo bearing Witneſs, and their Thoughts* their λογισμοι, their Reaſonings within them *either accuſing or excuſing one another,* and alſo that they deſerve Death for it; for ſpeaking of the ſame Gentiles who had no other Law, he ſays at the 32d *Verſe* of the 1ſt *Chap. Who knowing the Judgment of God, that they which commit ſuch things,* i. e. Things forbidden by this Law of Nature and right Reaſon, *are worthy of Death.*

2. By raiſing up fit Perſons, inſpiring them with the Knowledge of his Will, ſending them to diſcover it to Mankind, and impowering them to juſtifie their Miſſion that they were ſent by him; and what he has communicated to Men by the inſtrumentality of ſuch Prophets, is called, in an eſpecial manner, his *reveal'd Law:* And this we have in the Books of the Old and New Teſtament, chiefly in the latter, wherein we have the laſt and moſt perfect Revelation of his Mind, and Law, which he has made by our great Prophet, his only Son, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; who has *perfected* the Moral *Law,* and *brought Life and Immortality to Light*; who has explain'd it more clearly, extended its Authority and directive Power more widely, and enforc'd its Obligation more ſtrongly, than the former Revelations had done; by clearing it from the falſe Gloſſes with which the Scribes and Lawyers had obſcured and defaced it, by ſubjecting the very Thoughts of the Heart to its Rule, and by ſetting its Sanctions of Rewards and Puniſhments in their due Light, both as to quality and duration: This is a *perfect Law* indeed, reaching to every thing in us that is capable of moral Good, or Evil; our Deeds, our Words, our very Thoughts re-

requiring in all the greateſt Sincerity, and Purity, and propoſing the moſt glorious Rewards to Invite, and the moſt dreadful Puniſhments to affright us into Obedience.

2. *In ſetting God before us*, we muſt conſider him as an exact and curious obſerver of our Behaviour, with reſpect to his Laws; this is what is meant by thoſe Expreſſions in Scripture, where he is ſaid to *weigh*, to *ponder the Ways and Spirits and Heart of Man*, Prov. 16. 2. *All the ways of a Man are clean in his own Eyes, but the Lord weigheth the Spirits*, and chap. 24. 12. *Does not he that pondereth the Heart conſider it, and he that keepeth the Soul, doth not he know it?* Other Metaphors are uſed in Scripture, taken from the practice of Men, in entring things of Conſequence, that they would not forget, in Books; ſo the Spirit is pleaſed to condeſcend to our Weakneſs, to ſhew that God does not only obſerve but remember all the Actions of every Man, with their particular Circumſtances. As to the virtuous Actions of good Men, the Prophet *Malachi* tells us, *cap.* 3. *verſe* 16. they *that fear'd the Lord ſpake often one to another*, i. e. frequently entertain'd one another with Holy and Heavenly Converſation, *and the Lord hearken'd and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him, for them that fear'd the Lord, and that thought upon his Name.* and the ſame Metaphor is uſed in relation to the Sins of Men, where *David* begs of God, *Pſal.* 51. to *blot out his Tranſgreſſions*, and when God promiſes his People *Iſrael*, Iſ. 43. 25. that *he will blot out their Tranſgreſſions, and not remember their Sins.* And in the Viſion or Prophetical deſcription of the laſt Judgment in the 20th of the *Rev.* where St. *John* ſays, *he ſaw the Dead ſmall and great ſtand before the Throne of God*, he tells us, that *the Books were open'd, and that the Dead were judged out thoſe Things which were written in the Books, according to their Works*,

3. Laſtly, *in ſetting God before us*, we muſt conſider him as a bountiful Rewarder of thoſe that are Obedient to him, and as a ſevere, but juſt Puniſher of ſuch as are Diſobedient; for that he might be ſo, is the great Reaſon, that he does ſo nicely watch, and take ſo ſtrict notice of the Actions, and even the Thoughts of all Men. This he tells us by the Prophet *Jer.* 17. 10. *I the Lord ſearch the Heart, I try the Reins*, to what end? Why, *even to give to every Man according to his ways, and according to the Fruit of his doings*: And this the Apoſtle aſſures us in 2 *Rom.* 5. &c. he will do *at the Day of the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, when he will render to every Man according to his Deeds; to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for Glory and Honour, and Immortality, Eternal Life; but unto them that are Contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath; Tribulation and Anguiſh upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil; but Glory, Honour and Peace to every Man that worketh good.* And now you ſee under what notion of him we are *to ſet God before us*, in relation to moral Actions.

1.

1. As an holy Law-giver
2. As a curious obſerver of our Behaviour with reſpect to his Laws. And,
3. As a bountiful rewarder of the Obedient, and a ſevere, but juſt puniſher, of the Diſobedient.

2. In relation to other Events, in *ſetting him before us*, we muſt conſider him, as the wiſe orderer and diſpoſer of them, and that none of them are the effects of blind Chance, or fatal Neceſſity, but all the reſults of his wiſe Councel; that every thing that befals us, or any of his Creatures, is by his appointment or permiſſion, who directs, governs, and diſpoſes all Occurrences to the greateſt and beſt Ends, his own Glory, and the good of thoſe that love and ſerve him.

The only remaining Particular to be explain'd, is,

3. How *we muſt ſet God* always *before us?* By which is not meant, that we muſt think upon theſe Attributes of God's Omnipreſence and Omniſcience every moment of our Lives, and actually apply our Belief of them to every the minuteſt, and moſt indifferent Action of them: But it is,

1. To live under ſuch an habitual Senſe of thoſe his glorious Perfections, as may influence the general Conduct of our Lives, and govern all our Actions of greater Conſequence, thoſe that are matter of Sin or Duty: But becauſe habits are neither got, nor preſerv'd without repeated acts; in order to obtain, and keep up in us ſuch an habitual Senſe of God's Omnipreſence, and Omniſcence, it will be neceſſary to fix ſome certain and ſtated times (beſides the occaſional ones which I ſhall mention by and by) for an actual Conſideration of them.

And ſurely, once in the return of every Day, cannot be thought too often, even by thoſe, whoſe ſtrait Circumſtances, and mean Imployments, make their daily Labour little enough for the neceſſary Support of themſelves and their Families; they, methinks, cannot grudge half an Hour in the four and twenty to be ſpent in this great Buſineſs; but how can they excuſe themſelves from it, whom their bountiful God has placed in a Condition, beyond the neceſſity, not only of labouring, but even of *taking thought for what they ſhall Eat, or what they ſhall Drink, or wherewithal they ſhall be Cloath'd?* (tho' God knows, too many hardly employ their Thoughts to any better Purpoſes) can they pretend they cannot afford ſuch a pittance of their time for this Employment? and yet were this ſmall Proportion but wiſely and honeſtly laid out in it by all of us, I will venture to ſay, we ſhould ſee another Face of Things than we now do.

That part of the Day, which I ſhould think would be moſt properly, and uſefully aſſign'd for this purpoſe, is the Morning, when we firſt wake, not only for the fitneſs and congruity of the Thing, as certainly it is very fit and congruous, that when God has preſerv'd us whilſt we ſlept, he ſhould be the firſt Ob-

ject

ject of our waking Thoughts: That when he, as *David* expreſſes it, *has been about our Bed* all Night, we ſhould entertain a Converſation with him, before any others are admitted, who come in the Morning upon Buſineſs or Compliment: But eſpecially, for the good influence it may have upon our whole demeanure the Day after; if by ſerious Contemplation in the Morning, we make a deep impreſſion upon our Minds of God's Omnipreſence and Omniſcience, it will hardly be wore out before Night; and if we do this every Morning, 'tis the likelieſt way to beget and maintain in us an habitual Senſe of them: But beſides living under an habitual Senſe of theſe Attributes of God,

2. To ſet God before us *always*, is actually to apply our Belief of them in ſpecial Caſes: And thoſe I take to be chiefly theſe three:

1. In time of Temptation, whether from the Pleaſure and Advantage the Sin will give, or from the Difficulties and Dangers a Duty may expoſe us to:

2. In time of Divine Worſhip; And,

3. In all remarkable Events that happen to us, whether Adverſe or Proſperous.

1. In caſe of temptation to Sin, it is to conſider that God who by his Laws has forbid the Thing I am tempted to, under the ſevereſt Penalty, is now preſent with me, and ſees, whether I comply with the Temptation or not, that he will eternally reward me if I do not, and everlaſtingly puniſh me if I do.

2. In time of Divine Worſhip, whether private in the Cloſet, and there it is to conſider, that though *the Door be ſhut*, yet God is not excluded, and however I am retired, *my Father which is in Heaven ſees in Secret*, that even my mental Prayers enters into his Ears, and the motions of my Heart are open to his Eyes; or publick in the Church, and there it is to conſider that God is in a more eſpecial manner preſent in the Aſſembly of the Faithful, that he knows out of what Principle, and for what Purpoſes every one comes thither, whether out of obedience to his Commands, and in hopes of his Bleſſing, or whither out of Curioſity, Cuſtom, Formality, vain Glory, or for worſe Purpoſes; that he beholds our Behaviours, and ſees whether our Heart go along with our Prayers, or whither we offer him only a Lip-Service, whether we attend to his Word, and receive it in the Love of it in order to practice it, or whether we ſleep or talk away the Time, in which his Ambaſſadors are delivering their Errand to us; or at beſt *are forgetful Hearers of it deceiving our own Souls*; whether we approach his holy Altar out of love to our Saviour, and in grateful remembrance of his Sufferings for us, which are there exhibited to us, out of a Sence of our own Sins and Wants, in hopes to receive Pardon for one, and a ſupply for the other at the Hands of our merciful God; or elſe out of baſe Deſigns, and worldly Conſiderations, thereby proſtituting the Ordinances of God to the ſervice of *Mammon*,

3.

3. In all remarkable Events that happen to us, whether Adverſe or Proſperous; in time of Adverſity it is to conſider, that *Afflictions ariſe not out of the Duſt*, but come upon me by the appointment or permiſſion of that God who ſees my preſent Condition, knows my Strength, and perfectly underſtands what is beſt for me, who is preſent with me, and can deliver me out of it, or ſupport me under it, and direct the Iſſue to my greateſt Advantage; in time of Proſperity, when I have received any Eminent, whether Deliverance or poſitive Bleſſings, it is to look above 2d Cauſes, up to God as the Author thereof, it is to reflect, that he that has beſtow'd the Mercies upon me, ſees how I uſe them, whether I employ them to his Glory who gave them, or in the ſervice of his Enemies.

And thus, by living under ſuch an habitual Senſe of God's Omnipreſence and Omniſcence, as may influence the general Conduct of our Lives, eſpecially our Actions of greater Conſequence, ſuch as are Matters of Sin and Duty; and by particular application of our Faith in thoſe Attributes, to the eſpecial caſes of Temptation, of Divine Worſhip, and in any remarkable Events, whether Adverſe or Proſperous that happen to us, we may diſcharge the great Duty, which *David* practiſed in the Text, *of ſetting God always before us.*

2. It now only remains that I recommend the Pattern he has ſet, to your Imitation; and methinks I cannot have much to do upon this Head. You cannot but infer from what has been already ſaid, the bleſſed influence that this practice would have upon you, not only in the forementioned Caſes, but in all Conditions and Circumſtances of Life.

What Temptation of Pleaſure or Advantage can prevail with a Man to commit a Sin, who knows and conſiders, that he cannot do it, but in the preſence and ſight of his Judge, who has ſtrictly forbidden it, and will Eternally Damn him for it; this baffles that poor Encouragement to comply with a Temptation, that privacy offers: in vain does the Adulterer watch for the Twylight to execute his filthy Purpoſes; in vain does the Riotous chooſe the Night for his Debauches; in vain does any Sinner ſeek out the remoteſt and darkeſt Corner for to act his Villanies in: By ſuch Methods indeed he may hide his Sins from the ſight and knowledge of Men, but alas what will that avail him, when whatever he does, *in Darkneſs and in the Cloſet*, is as open to God, as if it had been done at Noon-Day, or *on the Houſe-top?*

What a Fool does this ſhew him to be, who being reſtrain'd by Shame, or Fear, or ſome worldly Conſideration from the outward Acts, will yet venture to gratify his wicked Fancy, by indulging Luſtful, Covetous, Revengeful or any wicked Thoughts; when God as clearly ſees his Heart, as he does the Actions that proceed from it?

What Difficulties or Dangers can hinder or affright that Man from his Duty, that lives under the ſence and influence of this Faith?

Faith? Oppoſitions we muſt expect to meet with in our Chriſtian Life, we are not only to ſtrive, and to run, but *to Wreſtle and Fight too, not only againſt Fleſh and Blood, but againſt Principalities and againſt Powers, againſt the Rulers of the Darkneſs of this World, againſt ſpiritual Wickedneſs in high Places*, againſt the corruptions of our own Nature, the Malice of wicked Men, and the Power of evil Spirits; but let theſe Enemies be as Numerous, and Powerful, and Malicious as they can, yet he cannot want Encouragement to engage them, that *ſets God always before him*. For what can more animate a brave Soldier, than to fight in the ſight of his Prince or General, who will be ſure to take notice of thoſe that diſtinguiſh themſelves, and Reward them with particular Marks of his Favour? How then muſt the *Soldier of Chriſt*, be encouragen in all his Conflicts, with his Spiritual Enemies? how muſt he be excited, *to fight the good fight*, by this Conſideration, that *the Captain of his Salvation* ſtands by him, not only to ſee how he behaves himſelf, but to ſtrengthen and ſupport, to help him to overcome, and then to beſtow upon him *the Crown of Life*?

How Conſtant, Reverent and Devout would this Faith make a Man in the worſhip of God? he would not dare to neglect the Duties of the Cloſet, at leaſt the offering up of a Morning and Evening Sacrifice to him, no more than he would to employ that time, which is ſet apart for the Publick Service, to ſecular and ſinful uſes? Would he, that conſiders that God ſees him whereever he is, dare Sacriligiouſly to rob him of that Day which is conſecrated to his more immediate Service, and of the attendance he ſhould pay him on it in his own Houſe, by making it, (no neceſſity ſo requiring) a Day for Journeys and Buſineſs, a Day of Recreations and vain Diverſions; or if he come to the Place of publick Worſhip, would he dare to ruſh into that more more immediate Preſence of the great God, with as little conſideration, *as the Horſe ruſheth into the Battle*? To behave himſelf there, with leſs reverence and decency, than he would in the ſight of his Prince, or of any great and venerable Man; or if ſome temporal Reſpects make his outward demeanure more grave and compos'd, would he dare to let his Heart be wandring after his *Mammon*, or his Pleaſures, his Mind be taken up with his worldly deſigns, or leud Intrigues? No, he that knows himſelf to be every where under the All-ſeeing Eye of God, will be as punctual to the returns of the Hours for the Devotions of the Cloſet, where only his *Father ſees in Secret*, as of the times for the publick Worſhip of him *in the great Congregation*: He will *keep his Feet*, as the Wiſe Man expreſſes it, *when he goes to the Houſe of God*; he will prepare his Heart before he comes thither, and watch both That and his Body too, when he is there, order the inward motions of one, and the outward geſtures of the other, ſo that he may preſent both, his whole Man, *an holy Sacrifice acceptable unto God*.

In time of Adverſity, what a comfort is it to reflect, that all a Man's Wants and Troubles are ſeen and known by him, who is able to ſupply and relieve him, and willing too, if he ſees it beſt for him? That how bitter ſoever the Cup he is to drink of may ſeem to him, yet the Draught is of his Heavenly Father's mixing, who *never afflicts his Children willingly*, but always for their good, who perfectly underſtands both his weakneſs, and the ſtrength of the Portion, and will ſo far abate of this, or ſupply the other by the aid of his Grace, that it ſhall *Work for his good, and the affliction, tho' for the preſent it may not ſeem joyous but grievous, ſhall afterwards yield him the peaceable Fruits of Righteouſneſs.*

In time of Proſperity, what a powerful Antidote is this Faith and Conſideration againſt all the dangers of that State? Is a Man's *Lot fallen in a fair ground, has he a goodly Heritage, does his Cup overflow*, is he laden with Honours, rais'd to poſts of Power? Why he who believes and conſiders that God who beſtows upon him theſe Bleſſings, or rather entruſts him with theſe Talents, is every where with him, and ſees how he employs them, will he dare to abuſe them to other Purpoſes than thoſe God deſign'd them for? No ſurely, were the rich Man thoroughly convinc'd, and would he think upon it, that God, who gave him his Riches to this end, *That he might be rich in good Works*, always ſees him, and obſerves what uſe he makes of them, and will reckon with him for them; he would not either miſerably hoard them up, and let them lie uſeleſs by him, or extravagantly ſquander them away in Vanity, Exceſs, and Riot; but having made a competent Proviſion for his Family, he would make his own Life comfortable, by a moderate and thankful Enjoyment of a Portion of them, and give himſelf the much truer Pleaſure, and more ſolid Satisfaction, in relieving the Neceſſitous, and making glad the Heart of the Poor, and doing all the good he can, by a cheerful and prudent Diſtribution of the reſt; did the Man diſtinguiſh'd by great Titles and Characters, whom his Lord has *bid to ſit up higher*, plac'd him in a rank above the common level of Mankind, did he believe and conſider himſelf always in the preſence of that glorious Being, who is exalted infinitely more above him, than he is above the meaneſt of his Brethren, and *who has alſo made him to differ from the reſt*, would he ſuffer his Advancements to miniſter to his Pride, and Vain Glory? would the poor Bubble ſwell with Air till it is ready to crack? would he look down with Scorn and Contempt upon his Inferiors? No, he wou'd cry out with [illegible], *Mine Eye ſeeth thee, O Lord, wherefore I abhor my ſelf in Duſt and Aſhes*; he would anſwer the Deſigns of Providence in advancing him ſo high, by rendring the beauty of Virtue and Piety more conſpicuous by his practicing of them, and by recommending the Practice of them more forcibly to thoſe under him, by the influence of his Example and Authority. Did the Man of Power conſider himſelf always in the Sight and Hands of that Almighty Being, who gave him his

Power,

Power, and expects he ſhould employ it to the ſame juſt and good Purpoſes, that he does his own, he would not abuſe it to countenance Violence and Injuſtice, and to trample down Innocence and Right, but he would make uſe of it, *To deliver the oppreſſed from him that ſpoileth him, to bring down the high Looks of the Proud, and to puniſh the wrong Doer.* And by thus guarding him againſt the ſinful Abuſes of his Proſperity, this Faith and Conſideration effectually ſecure a Man from thoſe Stings, and Horrors, with which his guilty Reflections upon ſuch Abuſes would have diſturb'd his Enjoyment of it, and by engaging him to employ it to the excellent Purpoſes, for which it was given him, afford him the juſt reliſh of it at preſent, and a reaſonable hope of God's continuing it to him for the future.

In ſhort, this Practice would direct a Man wiſely in the whole Conduct of his moral Life, and carry him with eaſe and cheerfulneſs through all the paſſages of the natural One: This lays the only ſolid Foundation, for that which alone can recommend our Behaviour to God in the one, and for our true Quiet and Comfort in the other.

That which alone can render our Labours and Services pleaſing to God, and which he accepts of inſtead of Perfection, is Integrity and Sincerity: But what can make us Honeſt and Sincere, and without Hypocriſie in our whole Behaviour, towards God, our Neighbour, and our Selves, in all our Deeds, Words and Thoughts, if the belief and conſideration that they cannot be hid from, but are all naked and open to God, cannot?

That which of all things, next to the guilt of Sin, makes Men's Lives uneaſie and troubleſome, is their too eager Concern and Solicitude, for the obtaining or ſecuring the Things in this World: But ſurely this Practice, if any thing would cure that reſtleſs Solicitude, and make us to be as the Apoſtle adviſes, *without Carefulneſs*: By which I don't mean that it would, or ſhould make a Man neglect the Duties of his particular Calling, or thoſe honeſt Methods, which God allows him to uſe for the obtaining, not only the neceſſaries, but the conveniences and comforts of Life; but it will teach him, after having uſed his own lawful Endeavours for thoſe Purpoſes, not to diſquiet himſelf about the Succeſs of them, but to refer that entirely to God, who alone directs or permits all Events; and whatever Iſſue he ſhall be pleas'd to give, humbly to acquieſce in, and approve of it, as knowing that he perfectly underſtands his Circumſtances, is better able to chooſe for him, than he is to chooſe for himſelf.

What abundance of Solicitude and Fears does he diſcharge himſelf of, that can caſt himſelf and all his care upon the Almighty God, who he knows is always with him and cares for him? his Days are not diſtracted by anxious Thoughts, nor his Nights diſturb'd with uneaſie Fears; *he walks before God* in ſecurity all Day, and lays himſelf down in great Peace at Night, being aſſured that God who is about his Bed, *makes him dwell in Safety while he is taking his Reſt.*

In

In all Times and Places, and upon all Occasions, he has free acc to God, lays open his Infirmities, his Wants, his Pressures to him, a by a faithful application of the promises of Scripture to himself (which he does as assuredly believe God speaks to him, as if on from the Dead, or an Angel from Heaven had brought the Me sage) he comforts and supports himself under, or rather exult and triumphs over them; is he perplex'd with difficulties, out which he knows not how to extricate himself, at a loss which wa to turn, or what to do? He applies to himself that Promise o *David's*, *Commit thy way to the Lord and he shall bring it to pass*: I he under a Temptation, that seems too weighty for him? he a plies to himself the Words of God to St. *Paul*, *my Grace is suffic ent for thee, my Strength is perfected in Weakness*. Is he surrounde with dangers that threaten every Thing that he values and love even his Life? he applies to himself what God says to his Pe ple *Israel*, by the Prophet *Isaiah*, *Fear not thou Worm Jacob, fo am with thee, be not dismay'd I will strengthen, I will help thee, yea will uphold thee with the right Hand of my Righteousness; when thou pa sest thro' the Water I will be with thee, and when thou walkest throug the Fire, thou shall not be burnt.*

To conclude, *He that sets God always before him* does by an Eye of Faith, *see him that is invisible* with great Comfort and Joy in in every Stage and Condition of Life; but never with more, than in the last Scene of it, when he lies upon his Death-Bed: When he is *To walk thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death*, even then *he fears no Evil*, for he sees *his God with him*, to make all his Beds in his Sickness; *with him* to support him under the Pains of his Distemper and decays of his Body, with the bright manifestations of his Presence, and ravishing discoveries of his Love; *with him*, to guard him against all the attempts of the Powers of darkness; *with him* to strengthen him in his last Conflict, to receive his Spirit into his Hands, to make his Flesh rest in hope, and finally to raise his Body from the Grave, and re-unite it to his Soul, to dwell together *in his Presence where is the fulness of Joy, and at whose right Hand are Pleasures for evermore.*

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